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Basics of Biblical Aramaic

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Miles V. Van Pelt
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Introduction

Aramaic is the neglected biblical language. It does not enjoy the status of a classical language like Greek, nor can it boast of being the language of approximately 75 percent of the Christian Bible, as Hebrew does. But we must not allow either status or statistics to preclude our commitment to teach and study this biblical language in Bible colleges and seminaries as a regular part of training candidates for the ministry of God's word. Faithfulness in the littlest thing is no little thing (Luke 16:10a).

This grammar was not written for Aramaic scholars or for students interested in comparative Semitic grammar. Rather, the purpose and design of this grammar is to provide the average student with a working knowledge of the Aramaic language appearing in the Old Testament. It was written for those students who desire to study, teach, and preach faithfully from those portions of the Bible that appear in Aramaic.

There are, in fact, 269 verses in the Old Testament that contain Aramaic. These texts are located in Genesis 31:47 (two words), Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:4b-7:28; and Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26.¹ Though it is not uncommon to refer to the Aramaic of this corpus as "biblical" Aramaic, the official label for this dialect is Jewish Literary Aramaic.² There were many other Aramaic dialects too, such as Palestinian and Egyptian Aramaic. But the single purpose of this grammar is to provide a descriptive introduction to the Jewish Literary Aramaic located in the biblical text. For this reason, all vocabulary, examples, and exercises are derived from the biblical text.

The grammatical presentation in this text follows the model of *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*.³ It begins with the alphabet and vowels, moves to the nominal system, and then progresses to the verbal system – covering first the Peal stem in each conju-

-
1. It is true that this corpus of material constitutes less than two percent of the Old Testament. Consider, however, that 269 verses are equivalent to Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Psalm 1. Compared to the New Testament, the Aramaic material of the Old Testament would be equivalent to 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Certainly none of us would want to be without the required skills to faithfully interpret these portions of the biblical text.
 2. For further study on the classification of Aramaic and the particular dialect(s) that appear in the biblical text, see Jerome Lund, "Aramaic Language," *The Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 50-60. See also Greenspahn, 5-12, Johns, 1-3, and Rosenthal, 5-6).
 3. Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar* (2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

gation and then the derived stems in the same manner. Weak verb morphology is emphasized throughout given its ubiquity in the biblical Aramaic text. Other important features of the grammar include the following:

1. **Hebrew First.** It is assumed that students will have studied at least one year of biblical Hebrew before working with this grammar. The presentation of vocabulary, pace of instruction, and grammatical explanations assume this prior study. One of the benefits of studying biblical Aramaic is that it can improve your knowledge and understanding of biblical Hebrew. Thus, in many instances, Aramaic is taught in opposition to, or in comparison with, Hebrew.
2. **Vocabulary.** There are just over 700 different Aramaic words in the biblical text occurring just over 7,000 total times. In the vocabulary lists that appear at the end of chapters 1-17, students will memorize all 268 Aramaic words that appear four or more times in the biblical text. This will give students access to approximately 91 percent of the biblical text without significant recourse to the lexicons. Aramaic vocabulary corresponding to previously memorized Hebrew vocabulary is grouped together for ease of memorization or simple review (chapters 1, 2, and 12). When possible, grouping by semantic domain (chapters 3 and 8) or part of speech (chapters 7, 9, 10, and 11) is utilized.
3. **Aramaic–English Lexicon.** The lexicon that appears at the back of this textbook contains all Aramaic words that appear in the biblical text. The definitions are helpfully derived from *HALOT*. Students will certainly want to have their own copy of *HALOT* for additional morphological information and lexical analysis.
4. **Exercises.** At the end of each chapter (excluding chapters 1 and 12), brief exercises are provided for the student to practice and reinforce the material presented in a given chapter. All exercises are derived from the biblical text. Nothing has been “made up.” When possible, the vocabulary from each chapter is utilized in that chapter’s exercises. In some instances, however, the student will need to use the grammar’s lexicon to complete the homework. The answer key for the exercises is located at basicsofbiblicalhebrew.com or textbookplus.zondervan.com.
5. **Annotated Biblical Text.** At the end of this volume there appears a complete biblical Aramaic text with annotation. This annotation is intended to reinforce the material presented in the grammar, assist with textual difficulties, and introduce students to helpful secondary resources (e.g., *HALOT*, Rosenthal, Jerusalmi). The selection of notes was a difficult task. Some will prefer more annotation, others less, and still others would have made different selections altogether. The current selection of notes is largely derived from my experience with students in the classroom over the past several years. I am always happy to receive feedback in this area. With a forthcoming electronic version, modification of the annotated text will be possible. Additionally, if requested, I would be willing to send out an electronic version of the annotated text so that instructors or students may customize the notes to suit their own particular needs.

6. **Kethiv/Qere.** The Kethiv/Qere phenomenon appears throughout the biblical Aramaic text with well over one hundred instances. To aid the beginning student, it was decided to follow the convention adopted by Accordance (BHS-W4) and provide both readings. The Kethiv appears first in the text with pointing indicative of its consonantal makeup. The Qere follows the Kethiv and is identified with square brackets (e.g., [לְעִבְדָּךָ] at Daniel 2:4).
7. **Statistics.** The number counts and statistics appearing throughout this grammar have been derived from Accordance (9.1, BHS-W4). No software is perfect, but none is better than Accordance. Additionally, in matters of counting, both Qere and Kethiv forms are counted independently for the sake of consistency. On a few occasions, some minor corrections were necessary. These do not account for any major statistical variance.

There is one final point to make. In my opinion, learning biblical Aramaic is a four step process. First, study the grammar and work through the exercises. Second, carefully work through the annotated text included in this grammar. Third, carefully work through a biblical text without annotation, using *HALOT* and other secondary resources when necessary. Fourth, never stop reading the biblical Aramaic text. If you want to keep the language, then you must use it regularly. If you translate just one verse per day, five or six days per week, you will be able to read through the entire biblical Aramaic corpus each year. In the course of a regular academic semester, you may be able to accomplish the first two steps. Completion of steps three and four will normally require special determination, commitment, and accountability outside of the classroom.

Abbreviations

BBA	<i>Basics of Biblical Aramaic: Complete Grammar, Annotated Text, and Lexicon</i> , Miles V. Van Pelt (Zondervan, 2011).
BBH	<i>Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar</i> , second edition, Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt (Zondervan, 2007).
ESV	English Standard Version
Greenspahn	<i>An Introduction to Aramaic</i> , second edition, Frederick E. Greenspahn (Brill, 2003).
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , Ludwid Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, revised by Baumgartner and Stamm, translated and edited by Richardson with Jongeling-Vos and Regt (Brill, 2000).
Jerusalmi	<i>The Aramaic Sections of Ezra and Daniel: A Philological Commentary with Frequent References to Talmudic Aramaic Parallels and Synopsis of the Regular Verb</i> , second revised edition, Rabbi Isaac Jerusalmi (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1982).
Johns	<i>A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic</i> , revised edition, Alger F. Johns (Andrews University Press, 1972).
Jumper	<i>An Annotated Answer Key to Alger F. Johns's A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic</i> , James N. Jumper (Andrews University Press, 2003).
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version
Rosenthal	<i>A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic</i> , Franz Rosenthal (Otto Harrassowitz, 1961).
Steinmann	<i>Fundamental Biblical Aramaic</i> , Andrew E. Steinmann (Concordia, 2004).

Alphabet

1.1 The Aramaic alphabet is identical to the Hebrew alphabet. It consists of twenty-three consonants, and it is written from right to left. For the purpose of review, this alphabet is presented below.

Consonant	Name	Pronunciation
א	Alef	(silent)
ב	Bet	b as in boy
ג	Gimel	g as in God
ד	Dalet	d as in day
ה	He	h as in hay
ו	Waw	w as in wow
ז	Zayin	z as in Zion
ח	Chet	ch as in Bach
ט	Tet	t as in toy
י	Yod	y as in yes
כ	Kaf	k as in king
ל	Lamed	l as in lion
מ	Mem	m as in mother
נ	Nun	n as in now
ס	Samek	s as in sin
ע	Ayin	(silent)
פ	Pe	p as in pastor
צ	Tsade	ts as in boots
ק	Qof	k as in king
ר	Resh	r as in run
ש	Sin	s as in sin
ׁשׁ	Shin	sh as in ship
ת	Taw	t as in toy

- 1.2 **Final Forms.** Like Hebrew, five of the Aramaic consonants have final forms. Remember, when one of these letters occurs at the end of a word, it is written differently than when it appears at the beginning or in the middle of a word. The changing of a letter's form does not change its pronunciation. The five final forms are listed below.

Regular Form	Final Form	Example	Translation
כ	ך	מֶלֶךְ	king
מ	ם	יוֹם	day
נ	ן	שָׁמַיִן	heaven
פ	ף	כֶּסֶף	money, silver
צ	ץ	קִרְיָן	charge, accusation

- 1.3 **Begadkephat Letters.** Like Hebrew, six of the Aramaic consonants have two possible pronunciations. These are the so-called *begadkephat* consonants (בגדכפת). To distinguish between the two pronunciations, a dot called a Daghesh Lene is inserted into the consonant. The presence of the Daghesh Lene indicates a hard pronunciation, and its absence denotes a soft pronunciation. A Daghesh Lene will only appear in *begadkephat* letters.

Begadkephat Letter	Pronunciation
ב	b as in boy
ב	v as in vine
ג	g as in God
ג	gh as in aghast
ד	d as in day
ד	dh as in the
כ	k as in king
כ	ch as in Bach
פ	p as in pastor
פ	ph as in alphabet
ת	t as in toy
ת	th as in thin

1.4 **Guttural Consonants.** The Aramaic gutturals are identical to the Hebrew gutturals. The four main guttural consonants are א, ה, ח, and ע. The consonant ג is considered a semi-guttural. It will not double with Daghesh Forte (like a guttural), but it may appear with Vocal Shewa (unlike a guttural).

1.5 **Consonantal Variation.** So far, everything that you know about the Hebrew alphabet has applied to the Aramaic alphabet system. There is, however, one interesting point of variation that requires our attention. This variation occurs at the level of phonetic representation, or how words sound. At times, some of the Aramaic words that share a common Hebrew root may be spelled, at the consonantal level, with slight variation. A knowledge of the possible changes will help you to see a connection between these two Semitic dialects and aid in your memorization and recall of Aramaic vocabulary. Some of the more common types of variation are presented below with examples. You will also observe variations in vocalization or vowel patterns. The changes in vocalization will be explained in chapter 2.

1. Hebrew ז may be represented in Aramaic by ד.

Hebrew	Aramaic	Translation
זָהָב	דָּהָב	gold
זָבַח	דָּבַח	to sacrifice

2. Hebrew צ may be represented in Aramaic by ט.

Hebrew	Aramaic	Translation
קָיִץ	קָיִט	summer
צוּר	טוּר	mountain

3. Hebrew א may be represented in Aramaic by ע.

Hebrew	Aramaic	Translation
אָרֶץ	אָרְעָה	land, earth ¹
עֵץ	אָע	tree ²

4. Hebrew ש may be represented in Aramaic by ת.

Hebrew	Aramaic	Translation
שׁוֹר	תּוּר	bull
יָשַׁב	יָתַב	to dwell

1. On one occasion, in Jer 10:11, the Aramaic noun אָרְעָה is spelled אָרְקָה, with ק in the third root letter position. This spelling variation preserves another phonetic option that derives from proto-Semitic and it is well represented in Old Aramaic (cf. Steinmann, 292; Johns, 6).

2. The Hebrew noun עֵץ should have been spelled as עָע in Aramaic, with Hebrew א represented by Aramaic ע in the second root letter position. The shift from ע to א in the first root letter position (אָע) was a secondary development in Aramaic.

In addition to the types of possible variations detailed above, certain Aramaic consonants appear to be used interchangeably, principally א and ה, and ש and ס. A few examples appear below by way of illustration.

5. The consonants א and ה are sometimes used interchangeably.

Option 1	Option 2	Translation
לָא	לְה	no, not
נְהָרָא	נְהָרְה	<i>the river</i> ³

6. The consonants ש and ס are sometimes used interchangeably.

Option 1	Option 2	Translation
אַרְתַּחְשֵׁשְׁתָּא	אַרְתַּחְשֵׁסְתָּא	Artaxerxes
שְׁבָכָא	סְבָכָא	harp

- 1.6 **Before You Move On.** At the end of each chapter, I have included a brief section identifying what you need to do or know before moving on to the next chapter. Pay special attention to these sections. They will help to focus your study of the information presented in each chapter. Sometimes information is presented for memorization. At other times, however, data appears for orientation, reference, or review. It will be helpful to know which is which.

- ✓ Review the alphabet, including final forms, *begadkephat* consonants, and guttural consonants. This is the easy stuff.
- ✓ Study carefully the issue of consonantal variation presented in 1.5. Understanding this section will help with Aramaic vocabulary and reduce the workload of memorizing “new” vocabulary.

3. In Hebrew, the definite article is הַ (He-Pathach-Daghesh Forte) and it appears as a *prefix* on the word it determines. In Aramaic, the definite article is אַ (Qamets-Alef) and it appears as a *suffix* on the word it determines. See BBA 5. The Aramaic definite article occurs almost 900 times in the biblical Aramaic text. It is spelled as הַ (Qamets-He) 66 times.

1.7 **Vocabulary.** In the first three chapters, vocabulary lists will be longer than normal. In this first list, the Aramaic vocabulary words are identical, or closely correspond, to common Hebrew words. There are no homework exercises for this chapter.

אב	father, ancestor	נביא	prophet
אבן	stone	נהר	stream, river
אלה	God, a god; (plural)	ספר	book
אלהין		ספר	scribe
אמה	cubit	עבד	servant, slave
אריה	lion	עבר	opposite, beyond
בית	house, temple	עין	eye
גבר	man	עלם	eternity, forever
דין	judgment, justice	עם	people, nation
דת	law, command, decree	עשב	plants, grass, herbage
היכל	palace, temple	פחה	governor
חיל	strength, army	צלם	statue, image
חכים	wise, wise man	צפר	bird
חכמה	wisdom	קרן	horn (of animal or musical instrument)
חלום	dream	ראש	head, top, chief
חנפה	dedication	רגל	foot
טל	dew	רוח	wind, spirit, mind
יד	hand, paw; might, power	שאר	rest, remains, remainder, remnant
יום	day	שלם	peace, welfare, health, greetings!
כהן	priest	שם	name
כל	all, every, whole	שמין	heaven, sky
כסף	silver	שן	tooth
כתב	writing, inscription, document	שנה	year
לבב	heart; also spelled לב		
מדינה	province, city		
מלה	word, matter, affair		
מלך	king		
משכב	bed		

תִּרְיִן 2 תִּרְיִן

Vowels

- 2.1 **Aramaic Vowels.** Like the alphabet, the vowel symbols (or “pointing”) used for the Aramaic portions of the Old Testament are identical to the vowel symbols used in biblical Hebrew. Thankfully, the Masoretes who created and employed this system of vowel representation used a single system for both languages. A brief summary of this system is presented below for review.
- 2.2 **Aramaic Vowel Charts.** In the following charts, Aramaic vowels are presented in three major categories: long, short, and reduced. Within these vowel types, there are five vowel classes (a, e, i, o, u), though not all are attested in each of the vowel types. Each vowel will appear with the consonant כ in order to show the position of the vowel with respect to its consonant.
- 2.3 **Vowel Chart 1: Long Vowels.** In this type, i-class and u-class vowels are not attested.

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation
a-class	כָּ	Qamets	a as in father
e-class	כֵּי	Tsere	e as in they
o-class	כֹּ	Holem	o as in role

- 2.4 **Vowel Chart 2: Short Vowels.** In this type, all five classes of vowels (a, e, i, o, u) are attested.

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation
a-class	כַּ	Pathach	a as in bat
e-class	כִּי	Seghol	e as in better
i-class	כִּי	Hireq	i as in bitter
o-class	כֹּ	Qamets Hatuf	o as in bottle
u-class	כֻּ	Qibbuts	u as in ruler

2.5 **Vowel Chart 3: Reduced Vowels.** In this type, i-class and u-class vowels are not attested.

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation
a-class	בִּי	Hateph Pathach	a as in amuse
e-class	בִּיְ	Hateph Seghol	e as in metallic
o-class	בִּיֹּ	Hateph Qamets	o as in commit

2.6 **Summary Vowel Chart: Long, Short and Reduced Vowels.**

	a	e	i	o	u
Long	בִּיֹּ Qamets	בִּיְ Tsere		בִּיֹּ Holem	
Short	בִּי Pathach	בִּיְ Seghol	בִּיִ Hireq	בִּיֹּ Qamets Hatuf	בִּיּוּ Qibbutts
Reduced	בִּי Hateph Pathach	בִּיְ Hateph Seghol		בִּיֹּ Hateph Qamets	

2.7 **Aramaic Vowel Letters.** In addition to the system of vowels presented above, the Masoretic scribes responsible for the preservation and transmission of the biblical text also employed a system of vowel letters. This is the same basic system used in the Hebrew portions of the Old Testament. For the purposes of review and reference, this system of vowel letters is presented below.

2.8 **Vowel Letters Written with ה (He).** Note that ה is used as a vowel letter only at the end of a word, as in מִלָּה (word) and אַרְיָה (lion). The name of each is a combination of the name of the vowel (e.g., “Qamets”) and the name of the consonant (e.g., “He”).

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation
a-class	בִּיֹּה	Qamets He	a as in father
e-class	בִּיְה	Tsere He	e as in they
	בִּיְה	Seghol He	e as in better
o-class	בִּיֹּה	Holem He	o as in role

2.9 **Vowel Letters Written with ו (Waw).** Note that the name of the u-class vowel in this type is unique. Its name is not a combination of any vowel or consonant as is the case with all other vowel letters.

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation
o-class	בּוֹ	Holem Waw	o as in role
u-class	בּוּ	Shureq	u as in ruler

2.10 **Vowel Letters Written with י (Yod).** The name of each vowel letter is a combination of the name of the vowel (e.g., “Hireq”) and the name of the consonant (e.g., “Yod”).¹

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation
e-class	בֵּי	Tsere Yod	e as in they
	בְּי	Seghol Yod	e as in better
i-class	בִּי	Hireq Yod	i as in machine

2.11 **Summary Vowel Chart: Vowel Letters.**

	a	e	i	o	u
With ה	בָּה Qamets He	בֶּה/בֵּה Seghol He/ Tsere He		בֹּה Holem He	
With ו				בּוֹ Holem Waw	בּוּ Shureq
With י		בְּי/בֵּי Seghol Yod/ Tsere Yod	בִּי Hireq Yod		

2.12 **Additional Pointing Symbols.**

1. **Shewa.** In addition to both the regular vowels and the vowel letters, Aramaic also employs the Shewa, both Silent and Vocal. The Silent Shewa has a zero value and is never pronounced. The Vocal Shewa

1. Some grammarians consider Qamets Yod and Pathach Yod to be vowel letters; others consider them diphthongs.

maintains a brief, hurried pronunciation. The Shewa is not listed in the above vowel charts because it is not like any other vowel. It does not belong to any vowel class (a, e, i, o, u) nor does it belong to any vowel type (long, short, reduced). The form of the Shewa is the same in both Hebrew and Aramaic. It appears as two vertical dots below the consonant to which it is associated, as in אֲנִיָּהּ (we) with a Silent Shewa or בָּעַל (lord, owner) with a Vocal Shewa. In the next chapter, we will review how to distinguish between Silent and Vocal Shewa.

2. **Daghesh Forte.** In addition to the Dagshesh Lene studied in the last chapter, Aramaic also employs the Dagshesh Forte. In chapter 1, you learned that six Aramaic consonants (the *begadkephat* letters) have two different pronunciations. In order to distinguish between the two pronunciations, a small dot (Dagshesh Lene) was inserted into the consonant (בּ for the hard *b* and ב for the soft *v*). The Dagshesh Forte looks exactly like the Dagshesh Lene, a single small dot. The effect of the Dagshesh Forte, however, is to double the consonant in which it occurs. In other words, instead of writing two identical consonants, side by side (ממ), Aramaic will write the consonant once and place the Dagshesh Forte inside that consonant (מּ) in order to indicate the vocalization of the second consonant, as in אַמְתָּ (cubit). Note that: (1) neither the Dagshesh Forte nor the Dagshesh Lene will appear in a guttural consonant (including א); and (2) both the Dagshesh Forte and the Dagshesh Lene can occur in a *begadkephat* consonant. When a Dagshesh Forte does occur in a *begadkephat* consonant, it doubles the hard pronunciation, not the soft. In the next chapter, we will review how to tell the difference between the Dagshesh Lene and the Dagshesh Forte when they appear in *begadkephat* letters.
3. **Furtive Pathach.** Both Hebrew and Aramaic employ the Furtive Pathach. When a word ends in א or ע and this guttural consonant is not immediately preceded by an a-class vowel, a Pathach will appear beneath the guttural, as in אֵרוּחַ (spirit, wind). The Furtive Pathach is pronounced *before* the guttural. In terms of syllabification, the Furtive Pathach is not considered to be a full vowel, nor is it counted in syllabification.

2.13 **Notes on Aramaic Vocalization and Spelling.** Most of the information presented above should be familiar to students who have studied biblical Hebrew. The few notes that follow, however, detail features of biblical Aramaic that do not exactly correspond to biblical Hebrew.

1. **Hateph Vowels with non gutturals.** In biblical Hebrew, you will recall that Hateph vowels appear with guttural consonants. In biblical Aramaic, however, Hateph vowels are *not* restricted to guttural consonants. They may also appear with certain non-guttural consonants. In Aramaic, Hateph vowels may be used before or after the consonants **ג** and **ק**, as in **קָגַר** (he locked) or **קָרִי** (it was read). Additionally, these vowels may be used before **ל**, **ג**, or **ר**, as in **גָּלִי** (it was revealed) or **צָפְרִי** (birds). It is *not* necessary to memorize the various environments in which the Hateph vowels occur in Aramaic. Simply be prepared to encounter these vowels in contexts previously unknown from Hebrew.

2. **Quiescent א.** When the consonant **א** appears without a vowel it is said to be “quiescent,” as in **רֵאשׁ** (head) or **דָּנִיֵּאל** (Daniel). Sometimes the quiescent **א** will drop out of the spelling. For example, both **לְמַאמַר** (saying) and **לְמַמַר** (saying) exist as spelling options. The first form preserves the quiescent **א** in its spelling. The second form drops the quiescent **א** from its spelling. A similar phenomenon also occurs in biblical Hebrew. For example, the Imperfect 1cs form of **אָמַר** is not spelled as **אָאמַר**, but as **אָמַר** (I will say). The **א** in the spelling of **אָמַר** is the **א** of the 1cs Imperfect preformative. The **א** of the verbal root became quiescent and does not appear in the spelling.

3. **Canaanite Shift.** Both Hebrew and Aramaic are classified as Northwest Semitic languages. The Northwest Semitic group of languages includes both Aramaic and Canaanite dialects. Prior to the time of biblical Hebrew, originally long a-class vowels “shifted” to o-class vowels in the Canaanite family of dialects. This shift from a long a-class vowel to a long o-class vowel is called the “Canaanite shift.” The Aramaic dialects did not adopt the Canaanite shift and this impacted the vocalization of certain Hebrew and Aramaic words that share a common root. In Hebrew, words normally spelled with the long o-class vowel, Holem Waw (**שָׁלוֹם**), may be spelled with the long a-class vowel, Qamets (**שָׁלָם**), in Aramaic. Understanding the Canaanite shift will help when identifying and memorizing certain Aramaic vocabulary. The following list contains some of the more common examples of Hebrew and Aramaic words that share a common root but differ in vocalization because of the Canaanite shift.

Hebrew	Aramaic	Translation
אָנוּשׁ	אָנֵשׁ	man
דּוֹר	דָּר	generation
טוֹב	טָב	good

Hebrew	Aramaic	Translation
לֹא	לְא	no, not ²
עוֹלָם	עְלָם	forever, eternity
קוֹל	קְל	voice, sound
שָׁלוֹם	שְׁלָם	peace
שְׁלוֹשׁ	תְּלָת	three ³

4. **Nasalization.** In Hebrew, the consonant ך may assimilate to a following consonant and appear as a Dagghesh Forte whenever the environment will allow for it. In other words, the consonant ך frequently disappears from the spelling of Hebrew words. In Aramaic, however, you will discover that the consonant ך is frequently added to a word, even when it was not a part of the original root construction. In one environment, the addition of the consonant ך to an Aramaic word is called “nasalization.” It is included as a part of the discussion in this chapter because it is related to the Dagghesh Forte (*BBA* 2.12.2). In Aramaic, nasalization may occur instead of gemination (doubling a consonant) by means of Dagghesh Forte. Or, to put it another way, nasalization may occur in the place of doubling a consonant by adding the Dagghesh Forte. For example, the Aramaic word for “knowledge” is מְנַדַּע (related to the verbal root ידע, “to know”). The ך in the spelling of מְנַדַּע is the result of nasalization. It is not spelled מְדַע, with a Dagghesh Forte in the second root letter. You will not be required to know when nasalization might occur in Aramaic. Rather, you will want to understand the phenomenon and apply your understanding of this concept when encountering what might otherwise look like an irregular form. Nasalization occurs in both nouns and verbs. In fact, you will find that Aramaic exhibits a preference for the consonant ך that is unknown to Hebrew.

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2. The negative particle לֹא is commonly spelled with Holem in biblical Hebrew (over 5,000 times), but this vowel is unchangeably or historically long. The status of this vowel is apparent from the alternative spelling לוֹא, which occurs 188 times in the Hebrew Bible.
 3. It is perhaps difficult to see the connection between the Aramaic adjective תְּלָת and the Hebrew adjective שְׁלוֹשׁ, both meaning “three.” The spelling of the Aramaic form exhibits three significant phonological changes when compared to Hebrew: (1) the change from ש (Hebrew) to ת (Aramaic) in the root letters (see *BBA* 1.5.4); (2) the change from Holem Waw (Hebrew) to Qamets (Aramaic) between the second and third root letters due to the Canaanite shift; and (3) the reduction of the open, pretonic vowel to Vocal Shewa in Aramaic. This third change will be explained in the next chapter.

2.14 Before You Move On.

- ✓ The information presented in 2.1 through 2.12 should be review material. If not, be careful to relearn what you may have forgotten. You don't want any gaps in your knowledge at this early point in the language.
- ✓ Focus your attention on the material presented in 2.13. Some of the items presented in this section are unique to Aramaic.

2.15 Vocabulary.

אַנְשׁ	man, mankind, person, (collective) people
אַע	wood, tree, beam
אַרע	earth, land (also spelled אַרְק)
בַּר	son; (mp construct) בְּנֵי
בַּר	field, countryside
גְּלוּ	deportation, exile
דְּהַב	gold
דֶּר	generation
חִזּוּ	vision, apparition
לַיְלִי	night
לְשׁוֹן	tongue, language
מְלָכוּ	kingship, sovereignty, reign, kingdom, realm; (fs construct) מְלָכוּת
מְנִדַּע	understanding
נְחָשׁ	copper, bronze
עֲבִידָה	work, service, administration
פְּרִזָּל	iron
קַל	voice, sound
קְרִיָּה	village, town
שׁוֹר	wall
תּוֹר	ox, bull

2.16 **Exercises.** In the following exercises, some of the Aramaic vocabulary presented above appears with corresponding vocabulary from biblical Hebrew. Using the information presented in 1.5 and 2.13, identify the type of variation appearing in the Aramaic vocabulary.

	Hebrew Word	Aramaic Word	Type of Variation
1.	אָנוֹשׁ	אַנְשׁ	No Canaanite Shift (see 2.13.3)
2.	עַץ	אַע	
3.	אֶרֶץ	אַרע	
4.	זָהָב	דְּהַב	
5.	דֹּר	דְּר	
6.	לָשׁוֹן	לְשׁוֹן	
7.	מִדְּעַ	מְנִדְעַ	
8.	בְּרִזָּל	פְּרִזָּל	
9.	קוֹל	קָל	
10.	שׁוֹר	תּוֹר	